

The Barn Dance Opera Journal

Official Publication of:
The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc.
and Entertainment Museum

A Not For Profit Organization

Barn Dance Website: <http://www.barndance.ca>

Vol. 30 2001

Summer Edition

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MIKE SLAUENWHITE, *Fiddler Extraordinaire*

by Lynn Russwurm

Mike Slauenwhite is perhaps the best kept secret in the annals of Canadian fiddling. Why, he never competed at Shelburne, he never recorded his music like the other greats of the Canadian fiddle, so on and so on!!

Yet here is a man who spent his life giving pleasure to countless people with his music and has been, by and large, overlooked by his peers in the fiddling world. He was blessed with the need for a stable home life, and never felt the yearning to climb the ladder

in the quest for fleeting fame. And yet some of the highlights in his career include some fifteen years with the Westernaires, through a name change to The Silver Bar Ranch Boys, which included three seasons on CKCO-TV out of Kitchener. With this group he also appeared twice on CBC-TV with "Pick The Stars" in the fifties. He guested on the prestigious "Country Hoe-down" with King Ganam, and was offered a regular spot in the house band which he turned down as it would require giving up his day job, uprooting his family and moving to Toronto. He

to parents of German descent. His father was a highly proficient brass musician who specialized on the euphonium. Born and raised in Nova Scotia, the elder Slauenwhite joined the Canadian army at the age of 15 (he lied about his age), and was immediately assigned to the Canadian Army Band. He went overseas in the first World War as a musician, but when things got serious he was given a rifle with a bayonet, instead of a horn and sent to the trenches, where eventually he was wounded. After the war, he went to western Canada, but on the return trip stopped over in Kitchener and decided to settle there. And there is where he joined the Rudy Roth Concert Orchestra. Home was always filled with music and at an early age Mike became interested in the trumpet, but this interest changed to the violin when he started taking lessons in public school and then private lessons with Rudy Roth. It's interesting to note that Mike is a contemporary of Wally Traugott, who was also a pupil of Rudy Roth at the time, however Wally's path turned to professional music and Mike's didn't.

At age fifteen, young Mike joined a small local band, The Waterloo County Boys, who were trying to become established. They lined up a radio program on CKCR in Kitchener, gratis of course, but this turned out well for Mike. One of the Westernaires, who were the top C/W dance band in the area happened to hear Mike on the air. He asked Mike to audition, as their fiddle player had just departed and so Mike was offered the spot. From then on Mike was playing every Friday and Saturday night, as well as many times during the week. When the band became the Silver Bar Ranch Boys and landed a TV show on CKCO in the early days of TV, the playing escalated to six nights a week, attesting to their popularity with the television audience. And all this time Mike held down the bread

occupied a chair in the K-W Symphony for almost twenty years, as well as being in numerous K-W Musical Productions shows. He found the most demanding job was playing in the orchestra for the Ice Capades.

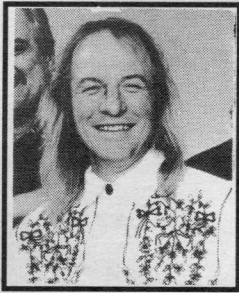
While he was with the K-W Symphony, he spent his week-ends with Clarence Petrie and The Nighthawks, entertaining in local bars, legions, etc. and that was quite a varied approach to music, symphony one night, country music the next. The symphony people would ask "How can you play that cornball hillbilly stuff?", the country people would ask, "How can you stand that longhair music?", but to Mike, variety in his music is what he enjoyed, says Mike, "I like all kinds of music."

Now, let's go back and take a look at the background of this man. Mike was born on October 26, 1935 in Kitchener, Ontario



The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



Thanks to everyone involved for making our 4th Annual Campout Jam-boree the best one to date. From great bluegrass performances on Friday night, dobro and songwriter workshops Saturday morning, the jam-packed Saturday afternoon jam session, the Barn Dance Show and Dance on Saturday night, to the uplifting gospel sing on Sunday morning. You can't just get this kind of entertainment anywhere. Needless to say, I can vouch for everyone on the committee that we have just as much fun putting it all together and participating.

I was recently in Las Vegas, Nevada, attending the American Federation Musician's Convention, with my colleague, Ron Coulthard. Besides taking care of business, we had the pleasure of contacting country singer, Bobby Kingston. Bobby is the son of the late Jack Kingston, who was one of Canada's great country singers and yodellers, who performed on CKNX Barn Dance from time to time. We got a mini tour of Bobby's new recording studio, and were treated to a live performance with Bobby's band "Country Tradition" at a honky tonk near Death Valley on the Nevada / California border. We had such a good time, we missed our flight out of Vegas the next morning. Ron and I did get home eventually. I'll have more about Bobby Kingston in an upcoming issue.

We also met with western movie actor and radio deejay, Shane Wilder, while in Vegas. Now here is one very, very interesting individual. Shane is a best buddy of Willie Nelson, and they could sometimes be mistaken for brothers. Once again, I'll be doing a story on Shane in the near future, and let you know why he's so 'radio friendly' to so many of our Canadian country recording artists.

You will notice in this issue, that an

old friend has returned to the page. Former editor, Lynn Russwurm is back with a regular column called, "Boots and Saddles". Lynn will be writing other stories occasionally, as well. I didn't have to do too much arm twisting, but it's great to have you back Lynn. Your knowledge of the country and western era, will be invaluable to many of our readers and we look forward to your stories and commentary.

E-mail, fax, or write anytime. Let us know how we are doing. We'd love to hear from you. See you at the next Barn Dance.

Contact:

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E-mail: heywoods@golden.net



■ A **BIG** Thank You to everyone who
■ purchased my latest CD / cassette
■ recording of "Honky Tonk Saturday
■ Night". Your support of Canadian
■ Country / Bluegrass music is greatly
■ appreciated. I hope to see you at an
■ upcoming Bluegrass Festival or Barn
■ Dance Show sometime soon.
■ Sincerely, **Al Widmeyer**
■ "The Singin' Dobro Player"
■ Phone: (519) 743-9430



The new Board of Directors for the Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum. From left to right, front row: Verna Steffler, Bill Simmermaker, Founder and Hon. President Earl Heywood, President elect Shirley Russwurm, John Heaman, and behind John is Dave Hedley. Back row: James Christman, Past President Wayne Otterbein, Doug Dietrich, Grant Heywood and Gord Baxter. Absent is Ron Coulthard. Also Lynn Russwurm (he took the picture).

The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

Phone (519) 357-2160

(or leave a message)

BARN DANCE WEBSITE:

<http://www.barndance.ca>

Earl Heywood

Founder, Honourary President, Advisor

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Directors:

Bill Simmermaker, John Heaman,

Dave Hedley, Verna Steffler,

Doug Dietrich, Lynn Russwurm.

5th Annual Fiddle Convention

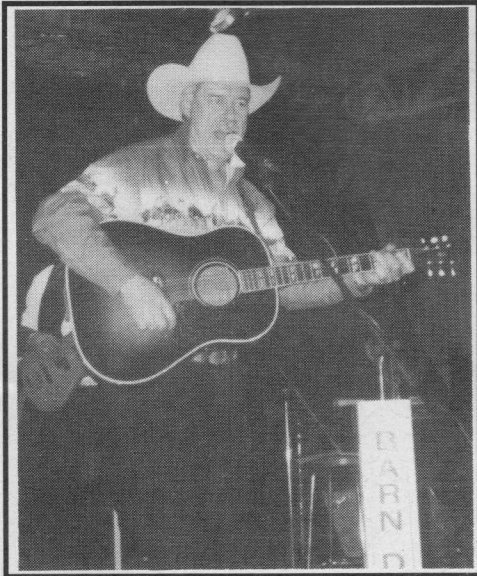
Registration for Sept. 30, 2001

Phone John Heaman at

(519) 396-6137

email: jkheaman@primeline.net

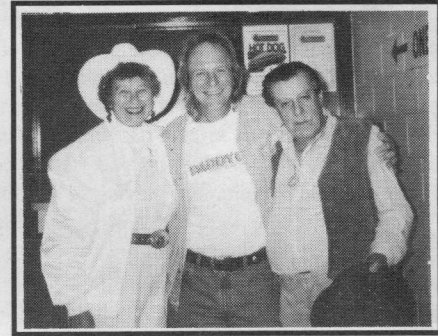
4th Annual Jamboree Campout Weekend is the Best Ever.



WAYNE MacGILLIVRAY sang some great country songs.



From L to R, BETTY BEERS sings harmony along with Barn Dance Show headliner, MARIE BOTRELL.



Country singer, DOREEN BROWN, (l) and musician JOE MICALLEF (r) seen here with GRANT HEYWOOD, just after he conducted the songwriters workshop, Saturday morning at the jamboree.



Band members, from L to R, GEORGE LONSBURY on guitar, Steel guitarist and musical director DOUG DIETRICH, and DOUG McNAUGHTON on fiddle.



Here are some wild country fans from the Wellesley area enjoying the Saturday night Barn Dance Show. (Hey!! They look like neighbours of mine, too.)



Some onstage country performers keeping traditional country music alive, at the Saturday afternoon Jamboree Jam Session.



BRIAN GEOFFREY, singer/guitarist from Michigan, seen here with dobro player AL WIDEMEYER (left) and Barn Dance drummer, GRANT HEYWOOD.



Young NATASHA and SHERRY MEISTER (sisters), gave an outstanding performance of singing and yodelling.



MARTHA and EARL HEYWOOD, singing the classic "Blue Canadian Rockies".

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers, including the musicians, for making the 4th Annual Jamboree Campout, the "BEST YET". The attendance was amazing, considering the weather conditions. I look forward to seeing you next year, along with any new friends you care to bring along.
Bill Simmermaker,
Jamboree Campout Chairman

Continued from Page 1

and butter full time job, after all, he had a wife and four children to support.

Came the sixties and the music scene started to change; the dance work dropped off and the Silver Bar Ranch Boys decided to pack it in. Mike started with the K-W Symphony, which proved to be a challenge, musically. But he also hooked up with Clarence Petrie and The Nighthawks, playing in legions and local pubs who were just starting to bring in live country music entertainment on weekends. Always the perfectionist, Mike still pursued his violin studies under Frederick Pfohl for about five years.

The early eighties brought musical burn-out for Mike and he put all his musical endeavours on hold for about seven years. Then he started doing a few things again, until he got his proficiency back and he started filling in with various groups. He also did a few gigs with a folk/R & B group at a church in Tweed, Ontario, where his brother-in-law lived and this was quite an experience for Mike, again something different and musically challenging.

Summer of 1997, Mike received an invitation from Lynn Russwurm to join the Barn Dance Band on the rejuvenated Barn Dance. Mike and Lynn had worked together in the Westernaires for about 2 years in the early fifties and so this "unknown" fiddler was brought in over the objections of several of the Barn Dance people. However, when it was heard what the twin fiddles of Mike Slauenwhite and Victor Pasowisty could do, all objections disappeared. Oh, those twin fiddles were a joy to hear!!

Two years later Mike curtailed all his musical activities, in order to spend more time with his wife who was having health problems. However things have stabilized to the point where Mike is again doing limited performances.

Mike can be heard on "It's The Saturday Night Barn Dance, Vol. 2", doing one of his own compositions "Barndance!". This was the first time he was a featured performer before the microphone in a recording studio setting, I hope there will be many more.

This is the story of a man who never felt the need to compete with others, never entered fiddle contests, but found the greatest satisfaction in playing good music, and raising his family of four with his wife, June, and now plays for the sheer enjoyment of playing. This is a man with both feet planted firmly on the ground, never temperamental, with a complete absence of ego that is seldom found in other musicians.

And there you have the best kept secret in Canadian fiddling, Mike Slauenwhite, Fiddler Extraordinaire.



The twin fiddlers. Mike Slauenwhite (left) seen here during a recording session, with the late Victor Pasowisty.

MARK YOUR CALENDER FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

* A Continuing Mini-Concert Series of Barn Dance Performers:

Sun., Aug. 12 - "Orange Blossom Special". Train theme music concert. 2 to 4 in the afternoon at the Palmerston Railway Heritage Park in Palmerston, Ont.

Sun., Sept. 16 - "Bluegrass, A Cut Above". Bluegrass music concert. 2 to 4 in the afternoon at the Wingham Armouries, Wingham, Ont. (Museum entry included with ticket purchase)

Admission: \$6.00 per person. For further info, contact Wayne Otterbein at (519) 565-2102.

* Canada's Fifth Annual Ole Tyme Fiddle Convention:

Sun., Sept. 30 - at the Royal Canadian Legion, Wingham, Ont. Fiddle Workshop at 10 a.m., Fiddle Concert at 1 p.m., starring Barn Dance fiddlers and other great fiddlers; followed by Hayloft Hoedown Talent Show and Dance. Bring your instruments. Musicians, singers, dancers and comedians welcome. For more info, contact John Heaman at (519) 396-6137.

* Country Tradition:

Sun., Oct. 14 - at 2 p.m. at the Heritage Theatre, Town Hall, Wingham. Jim Swan - Master of Ceremonies and featuring: Paul Weber, Smoky Weber, Sue Gottfried, Janet Turner, Gerald Davidson, Wayne Riehl, and the Barn Dance Band. Tickets \$16.00 in advance or \$18.00 at the door. For reservations, call (519) 357-4082.

* Denim and Diamonds:

Sun., Oct. 21 - at 2 p.m. at the Country Heritage Park, Milton. A 2 hour stage concert featuring the best of Ontario's Traditional Country Music Artists. Jim Swan - Master of Ceremonies and featuring: Larry Mercey, Earl & Martha Heywood, Randy Satchell, Mandi Craddock, Jamie Gordon, John & Geneva Heaman, Dan Mighton & Ian Leith, and the Barn Dance Band. Tickets \$18.00 in advance or \$20.00 at the door. For reservations, contact Country Heritage Park, or the CKNX Barn Dance Society.

The Sewers Trio

The Sewers Trio performed in the late 1930's and the early 1940's. Seen in the photo are brothers Jim, Russell and Bob (from left to right), who combined with their sister Marjorie at various times to create the Sewers' Trio. (For some reason only three performed together at any one time, but Russell was always the main player in the group.)

It all began when Russell at 12 years old rode his bicycle from Culross Township to Kincardine for summer holidays at his grandparents. Russell's cousin Jim Young had a guitar that he wanted to trade for the bicycle. Russell traded his ride home for a guitar when his grandfather agreed to drive him home in an old Model 490 Chev Coupe.

There was no one to take formal lessons from, so he learned from song books and by ear. Once he was comfortable with the guitar, he bought a harmonica, a holder and a new Stewart Arch Top Guitar (seen in photo) for \$45.00 from L. Schuett's of Walkerton, Ont.

Russell, Jim, Bob and Marjorie honed their singing style in the parlour of their country home, aspiring to be like their idols, the Carter Family. Bob also learned to play guitar as well as sing and yodel like Wilf Carter. Jim was blessed with a high golden

tenor voice and Marjorie had a beautiful voice in the vein of Patty Lovelace.

As their skills and confidence grew, they branched out and obtained a half hour radio spot on CKNX Wingham, when the studio was at its original site on the Main Street in what was once an old hotel. The town and community donated the old high school to Doc Cruickshank for \$1.00. The Sewers Trio performed their weekly show until it burned down.

Their most requested song was a gospel piece entitled "What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul".

Regretfully the Sewers' never performed in the new rebuilt facilities, but carried on the music in their own way, singing at family gathering (Christmas, Easter, etc.) and passing their talents onto their children.

Russell and his son Dale carried on the Sewers' musical tradition over the past 40 years with performances at hotels, concert halls and even at Stratford's Festival Theatre.

Russell as of this letter is 85 years old and still continues to perform and entertain audiences with his guitar and harmonica at seniors' homes, family gatherings and jamborees.



Boots and Saddles



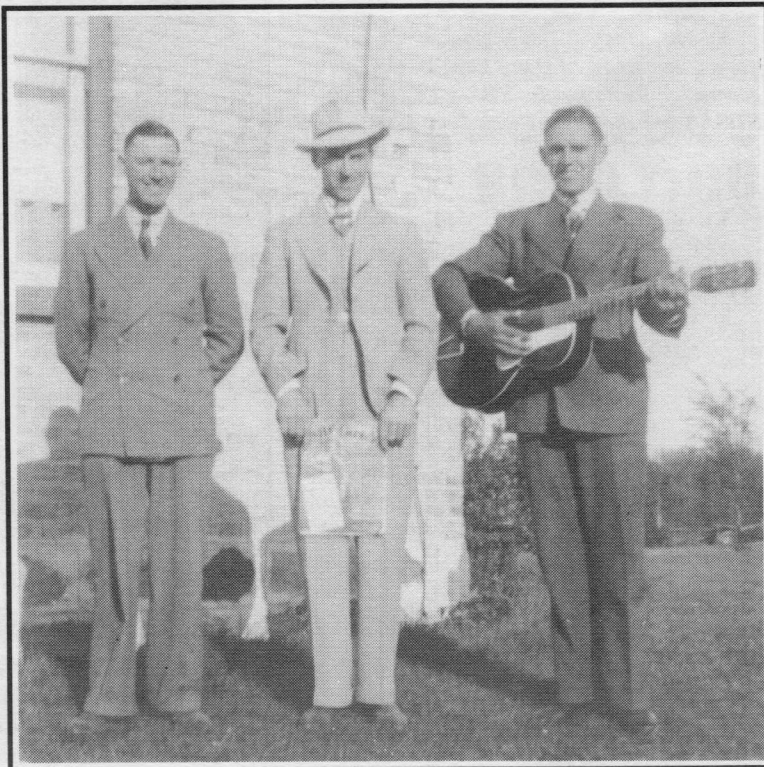
by Lynn Russwurm

When Grant Heywood asked me to do a regular column as a feature in the Barn Dance Newsletter, my first reaction was, what would I write about? Grant said "write about anything you like as a historian of country music". I said you'll get a column every issue so here I am. I'm just going to spend most of this first effort reminiscing and giving you a bit about my personal life as pertains to being a "historian".

Country music, and especially the CKNX Barn Dance have been with me for as long as I can remember. I was born and raised on a farm near Carlsruhe, Ont. My Dad had a gramophone and some of my earliest memories are of listening to some of his 78's. He didn't have many, but I can still hear Wilf Carter, Jimmie Rodgers, Gene Autry and many others. One of my favourites then and today was Gene Autry singing "My Old Pal of Yesterday", which you may have heard me sing on several of our resurrected Barn Dances. I even recorded it with my band, The Jamboree Reunion Band.

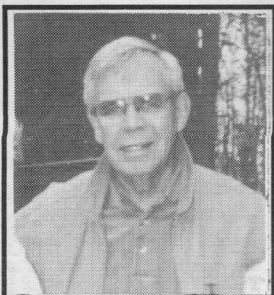
When I was about 8 years old, my brother Lorne and I were holidaying at my grandmother's farm, which we often did, when the hired man, his name was Leonard Meyer, pulled out his guitar and sang to us for about half an hour. You can't imagine how awed and impressed I was with that impromptu performance, the one song that still stands out in my memory was "Mother, The Queen of my Heart" which I later found out was a Jimmie Rodgers song. Leonard was from the Formosa area, and some of you may remember him. This unlikely event did much to form my love of country music.

My parents bought our first radio about 1939 and that's when I first became a steady listener of the CKNX Barn Dance. I had heard it a few times before at my grandmother's farm. Actually, the Barn Dance was required listening at our house, as my Dad always made sure the chores were done in time for the show. My brother didn't dare turn over to listen to the Maple Leaf hockey broadcasts until after the Barn Dance was over. When I was a little older, into my teens and could stay up later, I discovered Roy Acuff and The Grand Ole Opry, but my favourite one was The National Barndance on WLS in Chicago. I found this to be a much more entertaining and personal show. I listened to Lulubelle and Scotty, Bradley Kincaid and so many more of these true country artists. But best of all, I remember a half hour broadcast from the WLS studio by Rex Allen and just his guitar and yodelling. I can still close my eyes and hear him singing "A Penny for Your Thoughts", this went on until about 1950 when Rex went to Hollywood to become a movie star. Rex was replaced by Bob Atcher, and he was just as great, and don't forget these artists did their half hour with just a guitar for accompaniment and even today I still prefer this kind of music, rather than with band back-up. Later, about the mid to late fifties, Bob Atcher was replaced by Skeeter Bonn, but he didn't have the same magic as Rex Allen and Bob Atcher, even though he could yodel like a son-of-a-gun.



Just Fiddling Around ...

with Bill Oja



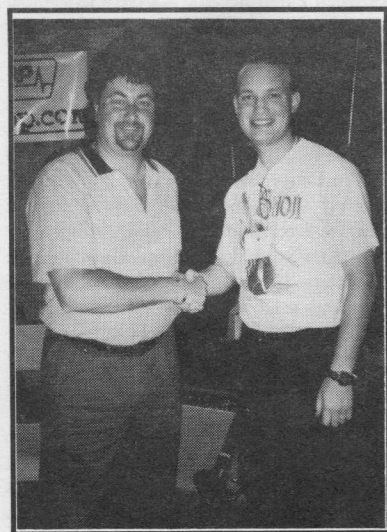
Not only good-lookin', but very talented fiddlers who get their share of trophies at fiddle and stepdance contests. Smiling after doing well at the Douro contest are the **YARABUSKIE SISTERS**, **PAM (L)** and **TAMMY (R)**, in the centre is **TERRI-LYNN MAHUSKY** of Renfrew.



Showing the judges just how he won the 50-64 class at Douro is the fiddling fireman **RANDY FOSTER**. Looking on are **WEBB ACHESON**, **BRIAN HEBERT** and Richmond Hill's **BOB ARBUCKLE**.



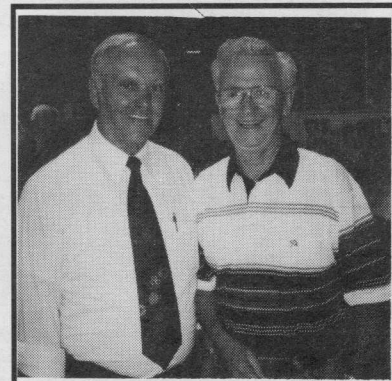
Practising for the Novelty Class at the Shelburne Canadian Fiddle Championships (August 10 - 11) are Kemble, Ontario's part of the four generation fiddle family, **THE BECKETT'S**. **TYLER** and **LINDSAY** are shown here with Dad, **JOHN**.



New Brunswick's **RAY LEGERE (L)** meets **CHAD WOLFE** who runs North Bay's largest fiddle and stepdance school. Ray plays fiddle and mandolin for John McDermoth and Rita McNeil.



JACYNTHE TRUDEAU of St. Charles, Ontario practising for her performance at the Chelmsford Fiddle and Stepdance Festival (July 13-14) is seen here with dawg house bass expert **MARTIN CHAPMAN** of Sudbury.



One of Quebec's finest old time fiddlers, **YVON CULLERIER (L)**, of Montreal greets **JIM DELANEY** organizer of the Maritime Fiddle Festival, to be held this year at Dartmouth, N.S. on July 14-15.



STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS heads out on the road for his summer tour with his first stops at Brantford on June 21; Thunder Bay on June 26 and then on to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and then on the way home stopping off for a show in North Bay.

COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown (Toronto and surrounding area)

4140.

* Havelock Country Jamboree, Aug. 16, 17, 18 & 19, featuring Kenny Rogers, Jerry Reed, Ricky Skaggs, Prairie Oyster, Berry, Gogguss & Dean, Paul Brandt, The Jim Cuddy Band, Farmer's Daughter, Asleep at the Wheel, Ian Tyson, Adam Gregory, Good Brothers, Beverley Mahood, Bill Anderson, Amanda Stott, Wayne Rostad, Stacey Earle, Gordie Tapp, Robyn Pahl and Johnny Reid. Camping available. Phone or fax 1-8000-539-3353.

* June Pasher appearing every Saturday 4 to 7 at OV's in parkdale, downhome country show.

* Downeast Country Music at Prime Pubs Inc., 70 to Esplanade, Toronto, (416) 362-2495.

* Live Entertainment - Celtic night, every Thursday, The Brogue Inn, 136 Lakeshore Rd. E., Port Credit. (905) 278-8444.

* Bring your musical instruments to the Alton Legion, the first Friday of the month. Ladies provide lunch.

From the President's Desk

by Shirley Russwurm

This is my first chance to say hello to all our members since taking on the presidency of the association. There are many challenges ahead and I will do my best to meet them head-on. My main objective will be to get all facets of the association back on track. I feel fortunate to have a really enthusiastic board of directors, and I feel we can all work together for the coming year.

The top priority will be to get the museum into new and better quarters and to get the full Barn Dance back on the road.

I have an open door policy, and would appreciate hearing from some of you, pertaining to what you would like to see on the Barn Dance, or any other ideas you may have regarding our association.

You may reach me as follows:

Shirley Russwurm, Box 63, Elmira, Ontario N3B 2Z5 Phone: (519) 669-2386 Fax: (519) 669-1814

* Oprey Toronto, at Silverthorn Legion, Roger Rd. & Silverthorn. Jamboree every Saturday 2 to 6. All musicians, singers and fans welcome.

* Sadler's Apple Orchard Jamboree, fourth Sunday of the month until October. Clarksburg, Ontario.

* Good Time Country Music Club, Sunday afternoons 1 to 5. One block east of Wilson Road, at Dean Avenue, Whitby.

* River Valley 17th Annual Bluegrass Jamboree, August 2, 3, 4, & 5, featuring Kal Shifflett and Big Country, The Mark Newton Band, The Kim Fox Band, Maple Creek, Albeert, Ryan Holiday and Local Talent.

* 14th Annual Musician's Cornroast, in memory of Larry Dee. August 12, noon to 8:00 p.m. Proceeds Lion's Club. For info call Paul Wasson (905) 986-0292 or Tom Mark (905) 985-9900. 4790 McKee Rad, off Hwy. 57, Blackstock, Ont.

* Appearances by Doreen Brown - Maple Leaf Country Jubilee, Friday night show, Baldwin, Ont.; Classic Country Music Reunion Sunday Gospel Show, Trenton, Ont.; Musicians Corn Roast, Aug. 12.

* August 3 to 5, Classic Country Music Reunion Jamboree at Centennial Park, Trenton. Sunday night special tribute to Willis Jarvis. All star cast for our 10th anniversary show. Tickets (905) 986-

★ BARN DANCE MEMBERS - WHERE DO THEY COME FROM? ★
★ While many supporters reside within Ontario, it is interesting to note that ★
★ the Society has members living on two continents, three countries, four ★
★ states and seven provinces. ★

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HOWDY FOLKS:

Greetings to all members of the Barn Dance Historical Society. Also a sincere thank you for your continued support for helping us launch The Music and Entertainment Museum. We hope this venue will become a permanent and prosperous tourist attraction based in the Wingham area. Our director from the Trillium Foundation, Theron Kramer, has asked me several times to be sure and include the history of the Donnelly's which he feels deserves to be a special

feature in this museum. At least nine or ten books have covered their story and recording artists including 'Stompin' Tom Connors' and myself have written songs on the plight of the Donnellys. We will make sure this becomes a display in our museum, and probably a big one at that.

June 2001 will always be etched in my memory as the pinnacle of my 60-years career as a musician and entertainer. May I take this opportunity to thank the people of the Blyth Festival for staging their recent play on the Donnelly story. A special thanks to Paul Thompson, who invited Martha and me to participate in his recent presentation of The Outdoor Donnellys. Also a special thanks to artistic director Anne Chislett, Anne Lederman (fiddler), and Eric Coates (guitar player and singer) who supported Martha and me in our singing of the Donnelly

songs which I recorded in 1971. From what I was told, there were over 40 volunteers who participated in the production of the Donnelly story, which continued for 16 presentations. Wow! What a terrific production it was and what a joy it was for Martha and me to become a part of this wonderful undertaking.

As a songwriter it was easy for me to write 14 songs telling the story of the Donnellys as I was born in the area where all this history took place. The recording The Tales of the Donnelly Feud is still available and for those fans that have been asking for a CD of the Donnelly songs, I plan to release one this fall. For further details, drop me a line at Box 443, Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0.

**REMEMBER,
THE SHOW MUST GO ON...**

Earl Heywood
Founder, Hon. President,
Advisor, Museum Curator

COME JOIN US!!

We need you as a member of

THE BARN DANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY and ENTERTAINMENT MUSEUM

P. O. Box 68, Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0 Phone: (519) 357-2160

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As a member you will receive:

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- The right to VOTE at our annual meetings.
- Advance notice of SPECIAL EVENTS.
- A one year subscription to our quarterly JOURNAL.
- The opportunity to PARTICIPATE by sitting on Committees.
- Special membership only rates at some of our events.

Name: _____

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SINGLE MEMBERSHIP

- \$ 20.00 - 1 year
- \$ 40.00 - 2 years
- \$100.00 - 5 years

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- \$ 30.00 - 1 year
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- \$150.00 - 5 years